The Power of 
the Positive

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As I enter my 22nd
year in education, I am now taking
stock of where I am as an educator
and looking forward to where I want
be as a leader in the future. Over
the course of my career, I have been
a teacher, coach, mentee, mentor,
assistant principal, and principal. And
my views of education and how I see
myself in education have changed.
Some of the change is directly related
to the people I have worked with
and the places I have been during
the journey. One thing stands clear
during the last 22 years: The “Power
of Positive” has always been a driving
force in who I am and the leader I
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BELIEVE IN THE POSITIVE
I began my journey in the Auburn
School District. I was blessed to be
hired at Mt. Baker Middle School and
spent an amazing seven years there
as a teacher and coach. I was young
and willing to work with kids both
in and out of the classroom. I taught
7th and 8th grade Language Arts with
an amazing group of teachers who
believed in kids and what they could
accomplish. I coached football, boys’
and girls’ basketball, and baseball
during my after-school hours. This
is where the power of positive truly
came to be.

My principal was the great Mark
Boynton. He was a master at getting
his staff to believe the positive and
understand the positive role they
could play in students’ lives. He
helped me believe in myself and what
I could accomplish with kids. Being a
principal was never on my radar until
Mark asked me, “You ever think about
doing what I do for a living?” My
initial thought was, “No way!” Then
he said one more thing, “I believe
you would be great in this role. Think
about it.”

I began to think about it. I was able
to see how positive he was with kids
and with his staff, and how it worked.
Kids believed in themselves. Teachers
believed in themselves. This is what
it was about for our school and staff.
Always believe in the positive and
where it can take us.

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IF NOT US, THEN WHO?
I spent the next two years completing the Educational Leadership program through City University and was hired as an assistant principal at Olympic Middle School in Auburn. I loved this school. The diversity of the community was its strength. My principal was Paul Douglas. He was a former Washington State Assistant Principal of the Year. He was tough, dedicated, committed to the school, and loved kids. Paul was positive in a different way than my previous principal. He taught me we must believe in and always be there for our kids, because if not us, then who? Paul believed we could lead students in a positive direction. No matter how tough things may look for a student, we would always be there for them, to lead them to another path. He leads with the heart and I loved it. A big part of who I am today is because of what Paul Douglas taught me.

After three years at Olympic Middle School, I accepted the principal job at Lincoln Middle School in Pullman. At the time, I believed I was ready to lead my own building. I had a tough first couple of years as I was figuring out the many things that new principals try to figure out on the fly. My assistant principal was Bill Holman. Bill is the most positive person on the planet. At every roadblock put in front of him, he finds a way around it and then teaches why the obstacle made him better. I needed Bill as my AP. He believes in the power of positive and taught me how important it would be in my journey. He was right.

POSITIVITY IS A CHOICE
For the last 12 years I have been the principal at Lincoln Middle School. I continue to learn and reflect through my time in Pullman. My assistant principals through the years have been Bill, Robyn O’Connor, Juston Pollestad, and Tammy Sewell. Each has taught me so much during my time here. One thing is a constant with each: The Power of Positive will take our building, staff, and kids in the right direction.

I once told my grandfather, Oliverio Vasquez, that I was in a bad mood because I got up on the wrong side of the bed. He told me, “Get back into bed and get up on the right side! You have a choice in who you are going to be today.” He was right.

I choose positive!